DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 453 CE 061 962

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TITLE	The Changing Role of Women in Twentieth Century Law Enforcement.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota State Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training, St. Paul.
PUB DATE	Sep 92
NOTE	14p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Minnesota's Bookstore, 117 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55155.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Attitudes; Adults; Employer Attitudes; Employer Employee Relationship; Employment Level; *Employment Practices; Employment Qualifications; *Females; *Law Enforcement; Nontraditional Occupations; *Police; *Police Community Relationship; Police Education; Promotion (Occupational)

ABSTRACT

A review of 44 studies and references on women in police work showed that for a long time women who had gained access to employment in law enforcement did so only in a very limited sense. It was not until the 1960s that women began to be assimilated fully into the ranks of patrol officers for the first time. With the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the amended version in 1972, which included federal, state, and local governments, women finally gained access to jobs in the criminal justice system on equal ground with men. Many of the institutional barriers such as physical strength tests which had prevented women from gaining entrance into law enforcement were eliminated in the 1970s. The slow progression of women's integration into law enforcement may be explained by the fact that administrators have been slow to adapt to structural changes in how law enforcement interacts with society in general. The entrenched belief that superior physical strength is necessary for police work has been discredited in numerous recent studies, as modern law enforcement has become community and human-service oriented. This orientation is highly congruent with female law enforcement officers' policing style, which stresses conflict resolution. Implementation of community-based law enforcement policies should provide police agencies with an opportunity to make wider use of the capabilities of women officers. (KC)

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LAW ENFORCEMENT

SEPTEMBER 1992

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PREFACE

Since its inception, the Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training has been committed to the recruitment, appointment, and retention of women and people of color in Minnesota law enforcement. During this time the Board has developed, implemented and coordinated numerous successful projects and programs. This has led to many colleges and law enforcement agencies to develop their own programs and cooperative programs with each other. However there is the need for more to be done by these organizations.

In order for this to occur, there needs to be a better understanding of the historical and research perspectives in this area. To provide meaningful information, a literature review was conducted and this staff article was written focusing on women in law enforcement. This will be followed by a second article in the near future on people of color in law enforcement.

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LAW ENFORCEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the time the first woman entered the field of law enforcement, there has been ongoing debate over whether women possess the necessary attributes required to perform their professional responsibilities as well as their male counterparts.

The discussion which follows examines the literature relevant to this debate. It examines the progress women have achieved from their first participation in police departments as matrons, through their struggle for full participation during the equal employment opportunity decades of the 1960s and 70s, and concludes with an examination of the present day leadership styles of women and how these qualities are similar to the traits found in the "community-based" model of policing.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Along with the great economic and social changes the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century brought to America came new sets of problems, such as a breakdown in the structure of the family, endemic poverty, child labor, and general social disorganization (Levine and Levine, 1970). Additionally, there was a general increase in overall criminal activity and an increase in crimes committed by youth and women. The modern women's movement arose in the late 1800s as one of the results of these social changes. Women first became involved in police work indirectly through their involvement in social work (Price and Gavin, 1982). Women began to work outside the home, not only for economic reasons, but also as a means of self-fulfillment. Many began to become aware of the extent of social problems created by the vast movement of people from farms to the cities. The interest of many women in addressing social injustice and their increased desire to work outside the home resulted in a natural transition for some into the criminal justice profession. Because female and juvenile crime was a novelty in the criminal justice system at that time, no structure existed to deal with these new types of criminal offenders. Women's organizations recognized this void and promoted the idea that women should be involved in the supervision of women and children in custody in prisons, detention houses and mental hospitals (Balkin, 1988).

The processing of juveniles, in particular, came to be dominated by the values of 'Therapeutic Justice' (Platt, 1969). Acceptance and implementation of the 'Therapeutic Justice' theory required the expertise of professional social workers, who during this time were mostly women (Price and Gavin, 1982). It was also primarily women who were employed to work with juvenile offenders and to intervene in cases involving offenses against minors, such as child abuse, or crimes committed by females (Talney, 1969). Women then, as now, were generally perceived as "inherently maternal", and consequently most useful in "mothering" types of capacities (Feinman, 1986). They thus came to be known as <u>matrons</u>.

New York City, which is credited with establishing one of the first full-time police agencies in the nation in 1844, hired the first police matrons the following year. Although these matrons did not have actual police powers, they were responsible for the supervision of women and children in two prisons. This hiring is the first known instance of women in police work in the United States (Owings, 1969). The services these matrons provided were similar to the duties performed in social service agency settings and were easily transferred to the police department environment. By 1888 sixteen cities had appointed police matrons to attend to women and children who were in custody and/or awaiting trial.

The same qualities which allowed women to gain entrance into law enforcement as just described may have prevented them from moving into other areas of policing. The services the matrons contributed to policing were viewed by many police officers and administrators as a role distinct from law enforcement itself (Balkin, 1988).

The first woman "sworn in" as a police officer and assigned to perform regular police functions occurred in 1905 in Portland, Oregon (Hutzel, 1929). Women police officers were primarily assigned to investigate complaints having to do with women and children. These complaints included investigating community conditions that encouraged delinquency, supervising commercial recreation open to women and children and establishing contact with girls needing protection. Other assignments included investigating complaints on lost children, neglected children, missing persons or runaways, and handling issues such as truancy, petty larceny, waywardness, domestic disturbance and vice. Women officers investigated complaints regarding crimes committed <u>against</u> girls or small children, and complaints regarding crimes committed <u>by</u> women and children, such as shoplifting and violation of prohibition and drug laws (Hutzel, 1929).

Women police officers were typically viewed by public and peers alike as specialized social workers. Due to the firmly entrenched perception of their role, it is perhaps little wonder that the overall status of women in policing remained relatively unchanged until the 1960s.

In 1964, Congress passed Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employer discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The purpose in enacting Title VII was "to achieve equality of employment opportunities and to remove barriers that have operated in the past to favor an identifiable group of employees over other employees" (Feinman, 1986). Although the statute originally applied only to private employers, it was amended in 1972 and application of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was extended to include federal, state and local government agencies (Feinman, 1986). This federal legislation, backed by the threat of withdrawal of federal funding, not only gave women access to jobs in the criminal justice system, but also guaranteed their right to compete for equal assignments, compensation, promotion, and other privileges of employment previously accorded only to men. Although Title VII may have opened

wide the door to law enforcement careers for women, the male dominated tradition of the police subculture allowed only a narrow opening (Berg & Budnick, 1986): the overall situation has shown only minimal change in the past three decades, as the proportion of women to men in most departments remains relatively small.

Throughout the decade of the 1970s the entire field of law enforcement underwent a major transformation. In many departments a concerted effort was made to attract women candidates. Many of the formal barriers to hiring women as officers were eliminated in the 1970s. Height requirements were reduced or eliminated, physical agility tests were modified and oral interviews were modified or eliminated (Inwald and Shusman, 1984).

Women became increasingly aware of their inferior status within in police departments and began to demand equal access to promotions based on their experience and performance levels. Often, for example, women were allowed promotions only within their own areas of expertise because they did not have full "police experience" i.e. patrol duty. Thus the percentage of women in patrol assignments became one critical indicator of the integration of women into policing (Price and Gavin, 1982).

Public acceptance of women in police work has come slowly. In 1974, there were 2,859 female police officers in the United States (Janus, Janus, Lord and Powers, 1988). As the role of females in policing began to assume a social and functional status similar to that of their male colleagues, they still
continue to be numerically underrepresented (Charles, 1982). By the late 1980s there were approximately 17,000 female police officers (Janus, Janus, Lord and Powers, 1988).

There is a lack of research and contemporary literature that adequately deals with the police experience from the perspective of female officers. A review of the existing literature reveals slow and tentative progress towards fuller utilization of women in policing up to the present. More women are currently being assigned to patrol duty than ever before; however, more women are assigned to non-patrol tasks and women are drastically underutilized in critical roles (Inwald and Shusman, 1984). The reasons for this slow progression can be summarized as follows: (1) the interrelationship between the structure of the police organization and the traditional understanding of policing as a male occupation; (2) the workings of the opportunity structure with in the organization; (3) the shrinking size of most American police departments; and (4) the general ideology of male superiority within our culture and the resulting expectation of male dominance (Price, 1985). Structural change of the magnitude necessary for full integration of women into law enforcement requires a fundamental change in the attitudes of those involved in policing, and such change must be accompanied with top-level command commitment. Where such commitment is lacking, any improvement in fully utilizing women in law enforcement will be cosmetic at best. Full integration means more than simply hiring an equal number of female officers to men. It includes many areas of work within a law enforcement setting, such as hiring, training, assignments, off duty socializing.

III. WOMEN AS PATROL OFFICERS

Two questions need to be looked at and analyzed carefully. First, what does actual police work consist of? Second, are there real differences in how male and female officers perform their work duties?

Analysis of the actual tasks involved in peace officer duties since 1970 has shown that as much or more than 90% of patrol time for the typical peace officer is spent on non-criminal and service functions requiring a minimal amount of physical strength or activity (Bloch and Anderson, 1974; Sherman, 1975; California Highway Patrol, 1976; Bartlett and Rosenblum, 1977; and Sichel, Friedman, Quient and Smith, 1978).

Yet, despite what is now known about the actual nature of modern policing, physical strength still remains a dominant value in assessing competency for gaining entrance into police organizations (White, 1991).

The patrol capabilities of female officers have been under serious study since the 1970s. Bloch and Anderson (1974) addressed the advantages and disadvantages of hiring women on an equal basis with men and the effects of employing a substantial number of women in patrol positions in Washington D.C. This study suggested that men and women performed patrol work in a generally similar manner. There were no reported incidents that cast doubt on women's ability to perform patrol work satisfactorily. Citizens showed respect for both the male and female peace officers in their communities, and thought of them as equally competent.

A study by Sichel et. al. (1978) examined the performance of male and female officers to determine whether women should be hired on an equal basis with men. This study indicated the performance of both groups to be quite similar. Citizens had favorable opinions of officers of both genders, but judged women to be more respectful and approachable, and overall, more competent. Citizens who came into contact with women officers tended to express higher regard for the department employing them. The study concluded that the results justify the use of women on patrol.

The Bartlett and Rosenblum (1977) study sought to identify areas of policing in which female officers performed differently from male officers. The study suggested that aside from female officers receiving fewer complaints than men, women were equally effective as men in all areas of police work.

The VanWormer (1981) study suggested that male officers are more likely engage in unnecessarily violent behavior to resolve conflict. Male officers also receive a higher number of formal complaints filed by citizens than their female counterparts. Moreover, women officers generally have more positive dealings with crime victims. (Note: Additional studies addressing the issue of women on patrol are listed in the reference section of this report and include: Kizzah and Morris, 1977; Bartell Associates, Inc. 1978; California Highway Patrol, 1976; Pennsylvania State Police, 1974; Sherman, 1975; Weldy,

1976; Ayoob, 1978; Rutland, 1978; Hickman, 1983; and Snortum, 1983).

Compositely, these performance studies indicated that women perform patrol functions as well as men. Female peace officers perform their duties in a style that is noticeably less aggressive than that of male officers. It would therefore be safe to characterize their policing style and job performance as superior in some respects to their male counterparts.

Although attitudes of male police officers towards their female coworkers have not been extensively studied, one theme does emerge from the research that has been conducted: male officers place great emphasis on the importance of traditional sex roles in the work environment (Bowersox, 1981; Hochschild, 1973). Research has shown, moreover, that the more successful a woman is at gaining recognition in traditionally male-dominated environments the less she is viewed as a woman (Janus, Janus, Lord, and Powers, 1988). It is interesting to note that male officers perceive female officers to be better educated and to perform better on written examinations. Additionally there is a widespread belief that women's success in discrimination litigation places males at an unfair advantage in competing for management level positions (Price, 1985).

The attitudes of male peace officers were also studied by Balkin (1988). His study also confirmed the presence of a widespread belief among male peace officers that female officers can not respond as well in confrontational situations, are not strong and aggressive enough to deal with common enforcement situations, and cannot meet the ordinary demands of patrol work.

IV. MODELS OF POLICING: COMMUNITY-BASED/COMMAND-CONTROL During During the past century, the purposes and methods of policing have evolved as different philosophies and models have dominated police administration. The most generally accepted current approach is the product of the 1930s reform era emphasizing a command-control model of policing. The command-control model of policing is primarily concerned with maintaining a well-disciplined, highly trained, and technically sophisticated force, insulated from improper political influence (Christopher, 1991). The command-control model is dependent on random and directed patrol, rapid response to calls for service, and retrospective investigations of crime. Command-control policing philosophy emphasizes the importance of arrests and citations. This form of policing has not demonstrably reduced crime and may in part be responsible for exacerbating public fear of crime (Kelling and Stewart, 1989).

A radically different model of police management has emerged in recent years known as "community-based" policing. It is viewed by many as the preferred policing style of the future. Community-based policing is not something new. Several attempts have been made to introduce key elements of community-based policing in the past decades, i.e., the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program out of the Los Angeles and Houston Police Departments. The current thrust in police administrative philosophy is to

engage officers within the communities they serve. Local communities expect a high level of quality in the interaction between police officers and the community.

The community-based policing model emphasizes service to the public, prevention of crime and cooperation between police and the public as the primary function of police (Persinos, 1989). It is believed that community involvement by police officers will promote cooperation and a mutually beneficial relationship between the police and community (Christopher, 1991). This orientation toward public service is more likely to result in better relations with the public, a reduction in the use of excessive force incidents and a better image for law enforcement agencies (Homant and Kennedy, 1985). Implementation of such a system calls for radical decentralization of authority control and an emphasis on greater individual autonomy in problem solving situations (Wilson and Kelling, 1989).

Recognizing the desirability of adopting some form of community-based policing, the chiefs of police in ten major cities issued a position paper endorsing community-based policing on April 16, 1991. Some of the cities included were New York, Chicago, Boston, and Dallas.

> Police agencies across America are moving toward a community based style of policing. This style of policing values partnerships, problem-solving, accountability, and a service orientation to our citizens. Our hope is for the Los Angeles tragedy to have a positive outcome by accelerating change toward this new form of policing, in order to better serve our diverse communities (Christopher, 1991). p.4.

The problems involved in switching from a traditional command and control structure to a community-based model are often formidable. The culture of the police organization developed over time and can not be changed by simply willing it so. Systematic steps have to be taken over a period of time if a department is to change its fundamental structure. The command-control model and the and the newly emphasized community-based policing model represent two entirely different views of law enforcement administration and practice: crime control on the one hand versus crime prevention on the other. Peace officers, police administrators, and members of the community must cooperate in bringing about a changeover to this style of law enforcement.

V. LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THE COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL OF POLICING

In terms of leadership capabilities, it cannot be demonstrated that members of either sex are superior to those of the other (Boch, 1990). Observed differences in leadership style can be attributed to variables such as role expectations, personal style, and the particular demands of each job. Male officers tend to be oriented more toward power and dominance and female officers more toward accommodation and conciliation.

Women in law enforcement have until now been working under a leadership style (command-control) that contrasts sharply with their own leadership style (community-

based). Because they tend to be generally more service-oriented in their approach to policing, female leadership styles are suited to the community-based model of policing which emphasizes community service and involvement.

Contemporary research in this field suggests a close relationship exists between the leadership styles of women and the role of community-based policing. The difference in the policing styles of male and female officers has to do with the internalized belief systems of authoritarianism. Relevant literature (White, 1991; and Carter, Sapp, and Stephens, 1989) suggested that persons who have internalized authoritarian modes of thinking and acting find it singularly difficult to adjust to the community-based policing model. Women, who do not share this basic orientation to the same degree, are more comfortable with the community-based model of policing (White 1991).

Failed attempts at integrating community-based model of policing appear to result from the difficulties encountered when attempting to change behavioral and attitudinal structures present in law enforcement today. Most officers were and are trained to command and conform, not to communicate. Police departments and training academies have long patterned their style of policing on military command structures. These authoritarian organizational structures are bound to affect how the individual police officer will relate to his or her department, peers, and the public. It is no surprise then that individual peace officers who have been professionally associated with traditional authoritarian departments are molded by the assumptions underlying such structures and will exhibit authoritarian behaviors and attitudes, which in turn engender anti-democratic and prejudicial beliefs and actions (White, 1991).

It is becoming increasingly important that law enforcement agencies utilize the full range of human resources available to serve the communities they protect. Implementation of community-based policing styles which allow law enforcement agencies an opportunity to better utilize existing resources: female police officers, to create strategies to enhance the profession. There still remains a need to recognize and make wider use of the leadership capabilities of women in law enforcement.

It is hoped that future law enforcement research will focus on showing the relationship between the leadership traits of women in police work and the community-based policing style.

VI. SUMMARY

In summary, this article has examined the fact that for a long time women who had gained access to employment in law enforcement did so only in a very limited sense. It was not until the 1960s that women began to be fully assimilated into the ranks of patrol officers for the first time. With the passage of Title VII in 1964 and the amended version in 1972, which included federal, state, and local governments, women finally gained access to jobs in the criminal justice system on equal ground with men. Many of the institutional barriers, such as physical strength tests which had prevented women from

gaining entrance into law enforcement, were eliminated in the 1970s.

The slow progression of women's integration into the field of law enforcement up to the present seems to be explainable only by the fact that law enforcement administration itself has been slow to adapt to fundamental structural changes in how law enforcement interacts with society in general.

The entrenched belief that superior physical strength is an essential qualification for police work has been discredited in numerous recent studies. Not only is a relatively small part of police work actually involved in confrontational situations requiring physical strength to any great degree, but modern law enforcement has evolved into a field that is primarily community and human-service oriented (e.g., Bock & Anderson 1974, Sherman 1975), an orientation which is highly congruent with female law enforcement officer's natural policing style. Community-based policing stresses conflict resolution which is more verbal than physical.

If community-based policing has yet to be fully accepted as a standard model of police administration and practice throughout the country, this is probably more due to entrenched behavioral and attitudinal structures that still characterize law enforcement in the United States and in the public's mind, than anything else. Implementation of community-based policing styles should provide law enforcement agencies with an opportunity to better utilize an existing and readily available resource provided by female police officers. There still remains a need to recognize and make wider use of the leadership capabilities of women in law enforcement setting. Because of present-day fiscal realities, it is becoming increasingly important for law enforcement agencies to utilize the full range of human resources available to serve the communities they protect. Women's progress towards full integration in this field will be slow until the current command structure is permanently replaced. Contemporary research in this field shows that there is a close relationship between the leadership styles of women and the role of community-based policing. It is hoped that future law enforcement research will focus on showing the relationship between women in police work and the community-based policing style.

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